



Safety in Numbers

Using Statistics to Make the Transportation System Safer

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February 2000 The Bureau of Transportation Statistics Update U.S. Department of Transportation

Project Overview

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) has hosted a series interactive workshops within each mode of transportation to gather insights on current data limitations that impact the safety of the transportation system. These four workshops will culminate in an intermodal transportation safety data conference, resulting in a roadmap toward a safer transportation system through better data.

Background

- I. In response to the 1999 National Transportation Safety Conference which identified better data collection and reporting across all jurisdictions as a priority
- II. In support of the DOT Strategic Safety Goal – “Promote the public health and safety by working toward the elimination of transportation-related deaths, injuries and property damage”

Project Objectives

- Make the transportation system safer by:
- I. Working with constituents to prioritize actions that will improve the timeliness, relevancy, and quality of safety data
 - II. Developing a roadmap to improve safety data that includes recommendations from across the transportation community
 - III. Improving transportation safety-related products and customer service to meet the needs of DOT's constituents

Desired Outcome

Delivery of a data roadmap to the Chairman of the Safety Council documenting action steps for the short, intermediate, and longer term.

Workshop Framework

The following workshop framework was developed by BTS in collaboration with the Safety Council, the Safety Data Task Force, and the DOT modal administrations to facilitate interactive discussions among workshop participants:

- I. **Session 1: Establishing Where We Are.** Discussion and description of current data collection, including key measurement and collection methods.
- II. **Session 2: Deciding Where We Want to Be.** Description of the desired future state for safety outcome measurement, data collection, and data use.
- III. **Session 3: Developing Ideas to Get to Where We Want to Be.** Identification of specific next steps.

Each workshop commenced and concluded with remarks from BTS, OST, and DOT modal administration speakers to provide context and to frame the day's activities.

Progress

Following are highlights from across the four modal workshops completed to date, which included water, air, surface 1 (rail, transit, pipeline, and hazardous materials) transportation, and surface 2 (highway and road) transportation workshops:

- I. Participants discussed key data sources and differences and similarities in measurement and collection across data sets. Common themes heard were that large amounts of data are currently collected and questions as to whether we are collecting the right data to make the transportation system safer. In some workshops, participants readily identified common data sources, whereas in other workshops, participants felt awareness of data sources should be increased, particularly focusing on increasing awareness of the full range of federal and private sector data sources.
- II. Issues raised by participants when describing a desired future state of data collection included: data relevancy, timeliness, and quality; comparability of

definitions across modes; and the need for better denominator and exposure data. Participants discussed the importance of gathering more precursor data to have the critical information necessary to prevent incidents. As a result related legal issues became a key focus. The need for more timely data echoed strongly across all workshops and was accompanied by discussions of technology as well as cost effectiveness.

III. Discussion of next steps by participants focused on developing a process to ensure follow-up and result in action. Participants indicated their desire to remain involved and be kept apprized of progress. Although common themes emerged from across all workshops, the next steps identified as a result of each modal workshop varied depending on the current state of data collection in that mode and the extent of data limitations.

Participant Feedback

All participants were asked to complete a written evaluation at the close of each workshop so feedback could be analyzed to assess effectiveness and refine future workshop. Following are selected comments:

I. "The workshop was an excellent start to bring safety issues to the table by all modes and the private sector as one."

II. "Helpful to hear other groups' views and have the ability to express our interests; good opportunity to meet and discuss issues common to all."

III. "Valuable exchange of information and ideas. Hope comments are useful and put into action."

IV. "Good discussion of issues. If the material developed is used, the process will produce a much safer industry."

V. "Well organized and thought-out. Probably productive in generating future vision of BTS."

Participants' feedback was also used to continue to develop the workshop format, including more time for interaction, more breaks, refining some framing questions used during breakout sessions, and diversifying the mix of attendees as much as possible. Overall, feedback focused on participants' desire to see action by DOT on safety-related data issues and to be kept apprized of progress.

Key Workshop Dates

I. Surface Transportation 1 Workshop (rail, transit, pipeline, and hazardous materials) - Completed Oct. 22, 1999

II. Water Transportation Workshop - Completed Sept. 23, 1999

III. Air transportation Workshop - Completed Oct. 6, 1999

IV. Surface Transportation 2 Workshop (highway) - Completed Oct. 29, 1999

Next Steps

I. Ongoing planning sessions with each of the four modal administration teams, DOT Safety Council, and the DOT Data Task Force – Jan., 2000.

II. Development of a Action Plan for the roadmap to improve safety data for review by the modes and the Safety Council – Jan., Feb., March 2000.

III. Provide update summaries to workshop participants – Jan. – March 2000.

IV. Presentation and discussion of the Action Plan proposal at the BTS Safety in Numbers Intermodal Conference – April 11, 2000.